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**Title : the speaking tree - Welcome Criticism As An Intellectual Mirror**

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Generally , no one likes to be criticised. Some people go to the extreme of abhorring any kind of criticism. But that is an unhealthy response, for criticism and dissent are positive elements in the lives of individuals and for societies.

I happened once to meet an American scholar to whom I put the question: “What is the most important aspect of western culture?” He replied: “Freedom of expression.” Elaborating on this point, he stated that in the west, dissent was taken right, wrong, good or bad as a sacred right of the individual.

Criticism is part of intellectual exchange. When you discuss an issue with someone without any reservation, what you have to say is very likely to take the form of criticism. In any critical process there are two parties: one who criticises and one who is the object of criticism. The former may expound a divergent viewpoint in a frank and open manner, and this encourages the latter to discover a new aspect of the subject under discussion. So criticism is good for both parties concerned.

The universe of thought is vast. No single person can cover all arenas of thought or knowledge. Given this situation, criticism affords the opportunity to broaden and enhance your field of knowledge. It is a kind of give-and-take process.

For example, a mirror is also a critic in a purely physical sense. If you have a spot on your face, the mirror will instantly draw your attention to it. And you accept this without the slightest reluctance. The same is true of the critic, who is like an intellectual mirror. If he points out some fault in your thinking, then you have to accept it. If you are not in a position to accept it instantly, you have at least to give thought to the point he makes. A negative reaction is not good because it is infructuous, both in the case of the intellectual mirror and the physical mirror.

Criticism is a process rather than an end. It entails discussion, which leads to intellectual development. Indeed, through the process of criticism we embark on an intellectual journey , trying to find answers to our questions. Criticism, opening the closed doors of a mind, enhances thinking capacity . As such, criticism is always good.

Criticism promotes thinking along new and different lines. It is the result of thinking in a fresh and original way and, as such, it is a healthy factor in society. Because, as it has been said, when all think alike, no one thinks very much. Critical thinking is constructive thinking. Creative thinkers are always able to discover new things, but creative thinking cannot be developed without critical thinking. Accept criticism with a tranquil mind and you will soon discover that your critic was an intellectual enabler.

Our greatest weakness is that we live within the boundaries of our own mind. This kind of thinking tends to induce self-conditioning. No one, except your critic, can de-condition your mind. That is, he points out those negative aspects of your intellectual make-up that had hitherto been hidden from you. Everyone must, therefore, welcome the critic. The critic is the only one who can help you rid your personality of undesirable traits. So, be eternally grateful to him.

There is a saying: “One who criticises you is better than one who praises you.” This saying is very correct and meaningful. One who discovers the value of criticism will surely appreciate criticism and happily accept it. Follow Maulana Wahiduddin Khan at [speakingtree.in](http://speakingtree.in) and post your comments there.